

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION**COMPUTER IMPLEMENTED METHOD AND APPARATUS
FOR MANAGING REPLICATED FILES IN A NETWORK**

A method and apparatus for communicating files over a communications network in which links, such as hyperlinks, to files are logical in nature, rather than physical in nature, i.e., associated with a particular electronic address. An up-to-date replication directory is maintained on each server and each server inserts current physical references corresponding to a file's logical references into a requested parent file, along with a reference to a server selection program, before the parent file is transmitted to the requesting client. The server selection program selects physical references in the order of their likelihood of providing the fastest response. If a queried server does not currently store the file, an alternate server is queried. Servers communicate with each other to create and delete replicas of files and to make corresponding updates to each server's replication directory.